



STEVEN M. FULOP  
MAYOR OF JERSEY CITY

## CITY OF JERSEY CITY OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

CITY HALL | 280 GROVE STREET | JERSEY CITY, NJ 07302  
P: 201 547 5500 | F: 201 547 5442



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**Contact:** Kimberly Scalcione  
Press Secretary

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### **Mayor Fulop and Statewide Leaders Call for Protecting New Jersey Increasing Climate Threats and Adopting DEP's NJPACT REAL Rules**

*“As New Jersey actively suffers from raging wildfires and relentless extreme weather, the need for these critical resiliency measures has never been more dire.”*

*– Mayor Fulop*

**ATLANTIC CITY, NJ** – At the **New Jersey State League of Municipalities Conference** today, Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop stood alongside fellow New Jersey mayors, emergency responders, environmental advocates, and community organizations in a united call for stronger action to bolster the state's preparedness in the face of escalating impacts of climate change.

The **New Jersey Protecting Against Climate Threats (NJPACT) Resilient Environment and Landscapes (REAL) rules** are integral for mitigating climate change, promoting environmental protection, and ensuring the safety and long-lasting wellbeing of our communities. New Jersey is threatened by climate change impacts, especially rising sea levels, more intense and frequent storm events, flooding, and increasing temperature.

Investments in climate resiliency are investments in livable, workable communities that support local businesses and create the foundation for neighborhoods to endure and prosper amid the increasingly severe challenges posed by climate change.

From establishing Jersey City's first **Climate and Energy Action Plan** to groundbreaking electric vehicle infrastructure and the many efforts in between, under Mayor Fulop's direction, Jersey City has become an **unequivocal national leader** in alternative energy and combatting climate change to help ensure a healthier, safer, and more vibrant community. Jersey City's forward-thinking approach offers a blueprint for other municipalities striving to combat climate challenges and safeguard their futures.

“We are compelled to come together today to call on the state's lawmakers to act now and adopt the NJPACT REAL regulations before it is too late. As New Jersey actively suffers from raging wildfires and relentless extreme weather, the need for these critical resiliency measures has never been more dire,” said **Mayor Fulop**.

The deadline for the NJPACT REAL regulations to be adopted, or at minimum, submitted for publication, is **August 5, 2025**.

With New Jersey experiencing increasingly destructive storms and rising climate-related challenges, today's coalition emphasized the urgent need for bold, long-term investments in climate resiliency to protect families, businesses, and communities statewide.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) proposed regulations that use climate modeling to assess the impact of climate change on New Jersey through the year 2100. The NJPACT REAL rules modernize New Jersey's land use regulations so that residents and businesses become more resilient to sea-level rise, extreme weather, chronic flooding, and other impacts of our changing climate by following the peer-reviewed climate science that indicates there is an 83% chance of at least a 5-foot increase in sea level rise by the year 2100 for New Jersey. The NJPACT REAL rules use climate modeling based on a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions that will temper the impacts of climate change. However, global emissions of greenhouse gases continue to increase each year, so the prediction of rising sea levels could grow in the future.

"New Jersey is experiencing the effects of the climate crisis acutely through impacts from water. We simply have too much water, which we see through coastal and flash floods, except for when we don't have enough water, which we see in the drought we are currently experiencing," said **Jennifer M. Coffey, Association of New Jersey Environmental Commission (ANJEC)**. "The science is clear, and weather extremes will continue to become more extreme. The NJPACT REAL rules take a moderate approach to preparing for the impacts of sea level rise. We need to make changes now in how we develop so that we are ready for the minimum of 5ft of sea level rise that will occur by the year 2100. The NJPACT REAL rules make New Jersey smarter and not just stronger than the next storm."

Investment in resiliency measures that transform New Jersey's built environments over the next generation will protect lives and support a strong, dynamic Garden State economy that will thrive rather than simply struggle to survive in the face of climate impacts.

"We need long-term solutions to address flooding and defend families and businesses from the extreme destruction taking place in our coastal communities due to more frequent and intense storms from climate change. That's why releasing the NJPACT rules for coastal communities is so important," said **Ed Potosnak, Executive Director for New Jersey LCV**. "Frequent flooding from severe storms is causing millions of dollars in property damage, snarling traffic, threatening clean drinking water, and endangering lives, and the problem is only getting worse. Governor Murphy promised bold solutions to protect communities, and we want to thank him and his administration for taking action by publishing the NJPACT rules to safeguard coastal communities."

The NJPACT REAL rules will enhance New Jersey's resiliency by elevating new development and requiring engineering techniques known as wet and dry proofing to minimize the impacts of flooding. The proposed rules apply only to new development and substantial redevelopment projects. Great protection against flood damage will save residents, businesses, and local government billions in recovery and redevelopment costs.

"Studies show every \$1 spent on resilience equates to \$6 saved in recovery/reconstruction costs and another \$7 saved in other economic benefits, such as wages lost and business closures," explains **Lucia Osborne, Delaware Bayshore Program Director for the American Littoral Society**. "This means that climate resilience has a 13:1 return on investment. We believe that allowing structures without the necessary resilience features will do more harm to the economy than the initial costs of safeguarding buildings and implementing other mitigation approaches would bring."

In addition to planning for sea level rise, the proposed NJPACT REAL rules improve protections for natural resources, including wetlands that filter water pollution and provide critical habitats. They also support resiliency through nature-based solutions for restoration to reduce flooding. Additionally, the proposed rules streamline applications for numerous state permits and incorporate permitting for restoration, making it easier for non-profits and municipalities to engage in partnership projects that restore floodplains and repair coastlines with nature-based solutions.

“Blistering heat waves, severe thunderstorms, and damaging floods are clear signs that our environment is ailing. We must reverse the degradation of our environment, which puts New Jersey’s residents and economy at risk. Wetlands are vital in absorbing flood waters, filtering out pollution, and providing essential fish and wildlife habitat,” said **Jim Waltman, Executive Director of The Watershed Institute**. “The REAL rules will demand that before we destroy additional wetlands, we investigate whether such destruction is truly necessary or whether there are viable alternatives to the proposed action. The REAL rules also require that when old development sites are re-developed into new uses, we seize the opportunity to pull back from the wetlands and better address polluted stormwater runoff. To reduce flooding and water pollution, NJDEP should move as expeditiously as possible to adopt the REAL rule.”

“The NJPACT REAL rules are important for safeguarding all of New Jersey's communities and vital waterways, including the Musconetcong River, a Category-1 National Wild and Scenic River. The impacts of a changing climate, such as increased flooding, extend throughout our watershed and all of New Jersey, and these rules are critical to protecting people and nature,” adds **Tom Dallessio, Executive Director of the Musconetcong Watershed Association**.

**Michael W. Klein, the Director of Government Relations for the Pinelands Preservation Alliance**, explains how the climate is changing faster than the laws meant to protect us. “The perennial problem of flooding in the Pinelands has been exacerbated by catastrophic storms in the past decade, threatening the integrity of drinking water for about one million people and irrigation for 200,000 acres of farmlands that depend on the Kirkwood-Cohansey Aquifer. The Pinelands Preservation Alliance strongly supports the DEP’s proposed REAL regulations to make New Jersey’s infrastructure and environment more resilient in the face of our climate reality.”

“With two major wildfires in the past two weeks in the normally moist Highlands forests, with reservoir levels rapidly depleting and no relief in sight, we are experiencing the paradox of the warming climate: a cycle of catastrophic flooding due to more frequent and more intense rainstorms followed by periods of serious drought. New Jersey’s two largest cities, Jersey City and Newark are experiencing this paradox in alarming ways: they are experiencing new flooding from sea level rise and inland flooding, and they are the water purveyors for their residents and surrounding towns and cities from rapidly depleting reservoirs in the Highlands,” concludes **Elliott Ruga, Policy and Communications Director for the New Jersey Highlands Coalition**. “A significant strategic response by the State of New Jersey is to finally update DEP’s land use regulations so they reflect the weather events we are currently experiencing and will experience based on conservative climate modeling. As DEP rolls out these necessary new regulations, we must support them,”

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All media inquiries should be directed to Kimberly Scalcione at [kscalcione@jcnj.org](mailto:kscalcione@jcnj.org).